

AMERICA THROUGH BRITISH EYES

PAUL MOWBRAY WHEELER

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A Study of the Attitude of *The Edinburgh Review*
toward The United States of America from
1802 until 1861

By

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To

MY MOTHER

whose constant encouragement
is largely responsible
for its existence,
this study is reverently dedicated.

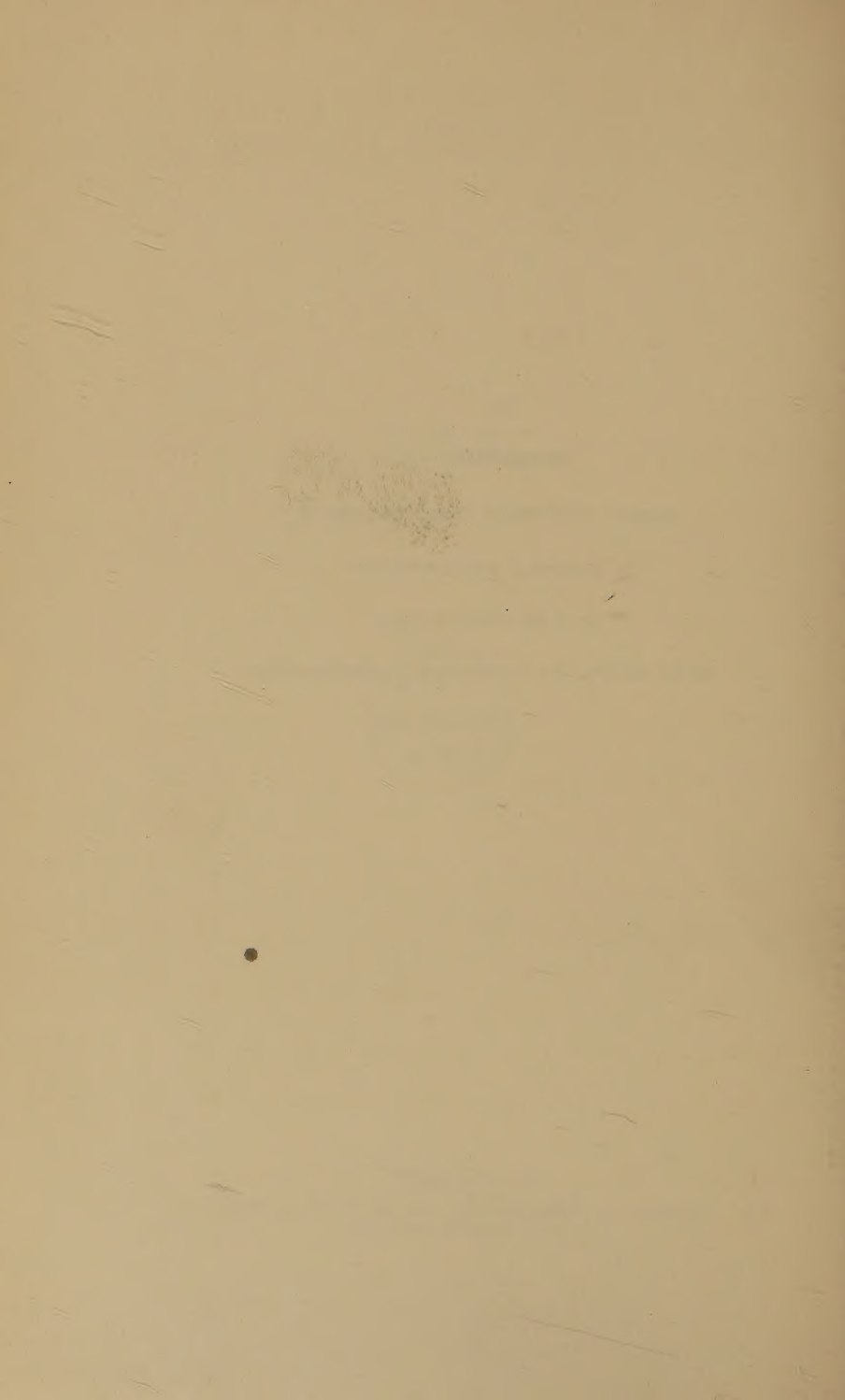


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INTRODUCTION

The reading public in this country have always been inclined to consider The Edinburgh Review as a harsh if not a prejudiced and unfair critic of all things American and to regard it as one of the important media for the expression of British hostility and disdain. For this ill-reputation there seem to have been three sources. One is the reflected notoriety which The Edinburgh naturally gains from its political foe, The Quarterly, which has been consistently hostile to America. Another is the candor of the reviewers for The Edinburgh, who are accustomed to say exactly what they think about anything they are examining and therefore often quite unintentionally have pained sensitive colonial dispositions. A third is the widely resentful and distorted attack which Walsh¹ made on all British journals in common.

It seems only fair that an American judgment of the attitude of The Edinburgh should be based, not upon a general impression of British insularity or upon a tradition of American resentment, but rather on a careful examination of the whole body of references to this country that appear in the Review. Such an examination is the basis of this study of the comments on America in The Edinburgh from its foundation in 1802 to the beginning of the war between the States. It is only a partial contribution to a much larger investigation aimed at ascertaining and defining certain elements which play an important part in the psychology of international relations. A series of similar studies offering a composite picture of America as it was placed before the British public by leading periodicals should be of real significance.²

Travelers in America

To England, America was a land of travel. There were a great many questions which could be answered only by reading the accounts of Europeans who had returned from the mysterious wilderness. Although it neglects some of the most important,³ The Edinburgh Review looks closely at forty-four such books. In almost every case for the sake of fairness, it undertakes to criticize and correct these accounts. It submits the motives, prejudices, adaptability, and intelligence of the writers to a severe analysis. It laments the ease with which some of these travellers disposed "of the character of a nation"⁴ and regrets that such "un-charitable and offensive writings increase the indisposition on America's part "to take advice, however kindly meant and judiciously proffered."⁵ Other and more important indicated defects of this type of writing are the manner of the style and the tone of expression. John Davis⁶ and Charles William Janson⁷ are taken to task because of their prejudiced attitude. Parkinson,⁸ and Fearon⁹ are proved guilty respectively of lack of proportion and of exaggeration. But the most dangerous defect of all is splenetic and unjust criticism, of which most of the important writers are partially guilty, but Ashe¹⁰ most of all. The Edinburgh Review calls his book "the most comprehensive piece of national abuse we ever recollect to have perused."¹¹ Mrs. Trollope¹² holds second place in disfavor. The reviewers, however, are not always hostile. Among others they praise Palmer,¹³ Michaux,¹⁴ Hall,¹⁵ and Lyell,¹⁶ but they reserve their warmest praise for James Stuart's Three Years in North America (Edinburgh, 1813), Harriet Martineau's Retrospect of Western Travel (Edinburgh, 1833), Charles Dickens's American Notes for General Circulation (London, 1842), and Charles Murray's Travels in North America (London, 1839). In brief, when a work of travel justifies the Edinburgh's praise, praise is ungrudgingly given. But when a book is sick with deliberate or careless distortion, the Review lays its diagnostic finger almost unfailingly on the disease and suggests preventive and remedial measures.

Natural Setting

Conflicting and incomplete reports brought back by travelers did not create any clear idea in the British mind concerning the natural aspect of the United States. As a result there is a tendency in The Edinburgh to emphasize the extreme vastness of scale on which Nature here demonstrates her power.¹⁷ A careful attempt is made in 1843 by The Edinburgh to divide the "enormous" extent of territory into five sections: the states of Missouri and Arkansas, "along with Iowa territory"; the great plains within which are the "semi-civilized Indian republics of the Choctaws, Cherokees, and Creeks"; the fertile desert west of these, constituting "the grandest hunting ground in the world with the sole exception of southern Africa"; the desert region which extends "far to the southward away into Mexico"; and, last, the Rocky Mountains themselves.¹⁸

The most important section of the country west of the Mississippi seems to the reviewers to be Texas. This vast area presents at first an unfavorable appearance, no matter from what direction the traveler approaches; but the immigrant is repaid for his temerity if he persists into the interior; and if he goes far enough he ends with the conviction that "a country more inviting to the settler of the English race whether from the mother country, its colonies, or the United States, it is impossible to conceive."¹⁹

Although emphasis is placed upon the aridity of the extreme western part of the United States, it is noted that there is a "champaign country" desirable in every respect,²⁰ "one of the most desirable and lovely portions of the earth",²¹ which later became California.

Mountain scenery in America arouses admiration more than once. The very monotony of the Alleghanies is "splendid." The Rockies are a "vast continuous wall" adorned with a "world of strange scenery" which The Edinburgh fears will prove too formidable a barrier to the progress of civilization.²²

Many minor streams and tributaries are mentioned, but the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi are considered most interesting. Although it is impressed by the grandeur and untamableness of the Mississippi, The Edinburgh is certain that of all American rivers the Missouri has the most peculiar and interesting characteristics.

It is pointed out that "one of the most striking features in the great western wilderness, is the magnificent growth of the vegetable kingdom",²³ though the enormous vegetables grown in California²⁴ and the tremendous trees of Oregon¹⁸ are dubiously accepted.

The Indian is a thoroughly vital figure to British eyes, and there is much written about him. The Edinburgh contends that all of the tribes probably owe their origin to one parent, and are descended from a more "powerful and advanced race than that which was found scattered over" the country by the first European hunters. It is a consistent editorial policy to refuse to countenance any sentimentality about the "silent Indian guide";²⁵ the story of Pocahontas is dismissed as "abominably stupid."²⁶ At least twelve tribes are mentioned and discussed, and Catlin's Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indian is considered the most important work on the subject.

Not the least significant thing about The Edinburgh's attitude toward the natural aspect of America is the regret expressed more than once that the extensive West of the Indian has to be tamed. The vastness, the unclaimed wildness, of the "desert" stretches appeal to the reviewers, and they note with glee that the Rockies, which have been crossed in only a few places, threaten to present an insuperable barrier to all attempts at westward expansion.

Historical Growth and Economic Expansion

To The Edinburgh it seems foolish to say that the American Revolution was inevitable. The whole thing was caused by the shameful Stamp Act and was not the climax of a long premeditation on any one's part. But all of the array of patriotism would have availed the colonists nothing had it not been for the incompetency of the British generals.²⁷ With entire lack of prejudice The Edinburgh estimates the "cold and steady firmness" of Washington and his "unusual sagacity and fortitude"; nor are the difficulties which he surmounted made light of. By his wise measures after the war and with the assistance of Franklin, Hamilton, and Jefferson who was "American to the backbone",²⁸ he laid the foundations of "those two opposite parties which now divide every quarter of the American union."²⁹

On more than one occasion The Edinburgh voices its hearty and indignant protest against the War of 1812.³⁰ The English had no real quarrel against the American government. They were driven on by the "preposterous policy" of the royal rulers into a contest "which both parties had entered upon with reluctance... and after both parties appeared to be convinced that no beneficial results could be expected from its continuance." The main trouble was that Great Britain did not realize what kind of nation it was fighting with. Was it likely, asks The Edinburgh, that an enormous country which had doubled her population in a little more than eighteen years and would probably continue to grow at the same rate would tolerate a foreigner in its midst?

After the two wars with Great Britain have been concluded and America has settled down to grow, it is the opinion of The Edinburgh that there are only two territories which it is to "the interest of America to add to her original dimensions"; namely, Florida and Louisiana. Unusually little is said of the former by way of description but a great deal of space is devoted to the latter.³¹ There is also an interesting justification of the annexation of Texas.³² The Edinburgh feels that all together too much importance has been attached to Oregon which, "whatever its ultimate destination may be", will be "almost exclusively

peopled by the surplus population of the United States."³³ It will never be settled by overland immigration because the two sections of the United States, Oregon and the "civilized" portion, are so entirely different in every way that the product of the one will hardly be successful in colonizing the other, and because the distance from the "westernmost limit of the fertile part of the praires to the cultivable region of the Columbia" is enormous.³⁴

Much more attention is paid to water routes and railways than to roads, which have not been perfected in the period under investigation. The Hudson River and the Erie Canal,³⁵ ³⁶ the river tributaries to the Mississippi and the Father of Waters himself,³⁷ are much discussed.

One of the most remarkable things about the United States appears to be the manner in which the four main races of mankind which have journeyed thither have amalgamated into a homogeneous entity.³⁸ A reviewer takes issue with Sadler's³⁹ contention that the increase in population in the United States has been caused largely by immigration from Europe, - insisting that by procreation alone the population doubles every twenty-five years.⁴⁰

The Edinburgh is consistently fair in its attitude toward the rapid growth of the new country. At an early stage it insists that neither the jealousy of the English nor the intolerance of America can prevent the United States from rising rapidly to supremacy.⁴¹ And it continues to emphasize the need of amicable relations with the prodigy.⁴² The land of progress is Anglo-Saxon, no matter what the conclusion may be. All that is needed is for the British to stop their eternal grumbling and the Americans their persistent boasting.⁴³

Religion and Education

The Edinburgh complains on several occasions that such travelers as Mrs. Trollope and Maryat give a one-sided picture of religion in America; Lyell, with his vivid pictures of religious revivals, is the only one who has studied the subject with the wisdom it deserves.^{44, 45} Among our early men of importance Franklin and Jefferson are singled out for special attention; the first, according to a reviewer in 1817, because he was an entire refutation of Voltaire's assumption that there is no such thing as natural religion;⁴⁶ the second, because it was one of the cherished aims of his life to put all religious sects upon the same footing.⁴⁷

On several occasions it is pointed out that the astonishing number of sects in the United States is the most characteristic and praiseworthy feature of American religious practice.^{48, 49, 50} It is claimed that the Americans have "twice as many churches as any other twelve millions of people on the globe",⁵¹ and yet "they all live together and eat together in the same cage!"⁵² Of all the various sects, perhaps the most singular are the Harmonites⁵³ and the Millerites.⁵⁴

In general the reviewers are openly hostile to Joseph Smith, branding him as the most unmitigated scoundrel that they have had occasion to attack;⁵⁵ but they recognize some unusual features in the Mormon religion: the baptism of the dead, the system of anthropomorphism "never equalled by any other sect",⁵⁶ and the complete absence of any devotional features. The only other sect which earns nearly as much attention is the Puritan, and it is particularly interesting only because of its association with "that great thaumaturgic display...of New England witchcraft."⁵⁷ The Congregationalists,⁵⁸ Methodists,⁵⁹ and the Roman Catholics⁶⁰ are briefly discussed. In short the Americans are a truly religious people. "In this respect they can be ranked at the head of all the nations in the world."⁶¹

The Edinburgh is impressed by the spread of culture and education in America. But here again, it is complained that travelers, like Dickens for example,⁶² do not tell enough about conditions pertinent to this question. England knows that all over the world the people of the United States are great buyers of rare books, but it wants to know what the favorite books are. "It is the book which works itself into public favour against the fashion that indicates the character of the people."⁶³ From the limited evidence at hand, however, it seems clear that "in America, where little other aristocracy exists, a high degree of education is looked on as a sort of title of nobility,"⁶⁴ and that "the universal diffusion of education is, in fact, the grand, the distinguishing excellence of America."⁶⁵ To be sure, "deep scholarship" is nearly out of the question in America,⁶⁶ and college students, according to some of the travelers,⁶⁷ are wicked, but the public school system is a most remarkable institution. "It is the public school system which brought Webster out of obscurity to enlighten his country."⁶⁸ The schools certainly seem to answer the demands of the peculiar type of government under which they exist.⁶⁹ The Edinburgh points out that a marked change in the moral level of the whole country is attributable to the widespread interest taken in education.⁷⁰

Social Reform

Under the category of social reform The Edinburgh Review directs its attention to three main issues, which are, in the order of their ascending importance, the liquor question, the penitentiary system, and slavery. Always a heavy drinker, John Bull has comparatively little to say in a disparaging way about the use of alcoholic beverages. Aside from a passing remark in 1859⁷¹ and a rather long review of twelve individual works concerned with temperance, there is little to be found in The Edinburgh on this phase of social reform. In 1854 a reviewer can point out that the teetotalers have suppressed the liquor traffic in parts of America⁷² and that the violent reaction against this legislation which has been predicted has not come about, whereas the moral advantages are notable.⁷³

Soon after 1824 the American penitentiaries force themselves upon the attention of Europe. An investigation commission sent out by France, as well as various travellers, particularly Charles Dickens, brings back interesting accounts. But The Edinburgh complains that the American prisons "from their neglect of the means of moral agency" have "little in them of a penitentiary character", and are rather, "houses of repression."⁷⁴ There are two prevailing systems: that at Auburn and that at Philadelphia, - the silent and solitary, respectively. The Edinburgh is not ready to accept the commissioners' finding that the "Philadelphia system produced more honest men, and that of New York (Auburn) more obedient citizens",⁷⁵ nor will its British conservatism allow it to agree with Mr. Dickens's superlative praise.⁷⁶

With slavery The Edinburgh makes no compromise whatsoever. There is no other wrong against which it launches such vitriolic and scathing denunciation. This is not the attitude of a particular school of reviewers nor of any one period in the development of the great journal. It is a consistent and growing thing--this tooth-and-nail antagonism from 1802 until the cessation of hostilities in 1865. The reviewers foresee not only the Civil War but also worse results:

it is prophesied in 1824 that America will be separated into two parts, one championing slavery and the other opposed to it."⁷⁷ The thing which seems most astonishing is that the Americans make no efforts to improve the conditions of the slaves, but that the very opposite is true.⁷⁸ In a review of Bancroft in 1847, it is maintained that the historian of America should approach the subject of slavery with hesitation and shame. The prospect is dismaying, for the dissolution which is bound to follow a civil war would "react heavily upon the fortunes of Europe itself."⁷⁹ An invisible change is noticeable in the American character. "Instead of the cultivated Aristocracy of the old slave states... we now see a race of bullies, ignorant of books and of life and unskilled in all gentle and high-bred manners."⁸⁰ In addition other abnormalities have fastened themselves upon America, because of slavery; liberty of the press is repressed; there is a "wholesale discouragement of liberal thought";⁸¹ there is scarcely a good book in the slave states;⁸¹ the church is everywhere discredited and enfeebled.⁸²

Though The Edinburgh speaks warmly against slavery, it contends that this warmth proceeds, not from an animosity for the American people, but from a hatred of the institution itself. It does not insist that it calls upon other nations to hate America, as Walsh had contended,¹ but "upon the Americans themselves to wipe away this foul blot from their character."⁸³ If there is anything they desire more than to see the United States abolish slavery, it is to see them hurl back a "triumphant answer to the invectives now pouring forth against them by the party which hates freedom, and even dreads improvement."⁷⁷

Government and Politics

Great Britain felt that the success of the American Government was to be explained by the natural environment rather than by superior wisdom on the part of the American people. The Edinburgh insists that the former is so important that America can not help emerging a full-grown and important government. The American commonwealth is on trial with glorious chances of success. By the middle of the century marvelous results already have been gained. But this is far too short a period with which to judge. The praise which the American government deserves rests on simple grounds: it is "so admirably adapted to the....wants and character of the people" that it is "the object of an attachment as enthusiastical as....universal."⁸⁵ Each person has an interest in the general welfare. Moreover the distance of Europe from America favors the establishment of this type of government.

America is blessed in several respects; by her very "newness" she is exempted "from many of the evils of the old governments of Europe." There are "no smoldering remains of feudal institutions." There are no violations "of political economy sanctioned by time and older than the age of reason."⁸⁶ Likewise the heterogeneous parts of the union are more closely knit together than the individual parts of Great Britain.⁸⁷ The chief charm of the American free government is "not so much in the election of president and congress by popular suffrage as in the administration of nearly all the business of society by the people themselves."⁸⁸ Its two most important advantages are the diffusion of intelligence and the tendency of the "course of legislation in the direction of the interest of the greater number."⁸⁹ One of the disadvantages is "in the decisions of that democratic commonwealth the voice of the noisy multitude has to be heard and it is easily deceived or cajoled."⁹⁰ "The question arising out of slavery and the principle on which the number of votes given to the several states should be apportioned" also seem to be problems which may cause tremendous upheavals.⁹¹ As early as 1830 the reviewers discern signs of growing jealousy between the states,⁹² and even

by 1808 party spirit has risen to "a most disagreeable, and alarming height in the United States."⁹³

The low cost of the American government is always a fascinating subject to The Edinburgh. The British "ought to suspend their contempt for America and consider whether they have not a very momentous lesson to learn from this wise and cautious people on the subject of economy."⁹⁴ Life and the management of government go on very well in spite of low salaries. Even the law itself is cheap. It pays a man to push his claims in court, whereas it is often cheaper to stay out of court in England.⁹⁵ The reviewers admit their inability to judge whether taxation in America is fair or not.⁹⁶

But The Edinburgh is no great admirer of Democracy in general; "the periods are so short, and the places so few, in which it has any probability of succeeding."⁹⁷ But its objections are political only. If disruption ever comes to America it will be because "such a vast mass of people can be no longer reconciled to one another." If the United States should fall apart, however, it will not be from "conquest nor defeat, external prosperity nor adversity, but from moral weariness at home." The rock upon which the government will split is slavery.⁹⁸ The enemy is within.⁹⁹

Poetry

If The Edinburgh is comparatively tolerant and fair minded in other respects, its attitude toward the literature which emanated from the wilderness and, in particular, toward American verse should be especially interesting.

During the first few decades of The Edinburgh's existence, considerable emphasis is placed on both political and literary matters. However, as the reader peruses its pages after 1860, he finds the political element predominating more and more. Up to the beginning of the Civil War The Edinburgh is interested in watching the development of its independent daughter. After 1858 there is a change in the relations of the two countries and in their attitude toward each other. Intoxicated by her new-found Elysium, America reaches out in all directions and greedily takes possession of everything that she can lay her hands upon. The Edinburgh watches and waits in vain for the settling down which it holds to be a condition necessary for culture and literature; but America has no idea of such a settling down or of the contemplation of the Arts from the comfortable leisure The Edinburgh considers indispensable to the creation of poetry. Following the Civil War, however, there comes a new kind of culture, and a relaxed attitude on the part of the American mind, which Mr Lewis Mumford, after William James, has called the "Pragmatic Acquiescence."¹⁰⁰ The Edinburgh loses interest, and its attention is taken up with the defense of political views and the exegesis of economic doctrines at home. Consequently, during this later period there are only a very few articles dealing with American Verse, the most significant of which we may dispose of with brief summary. Our main investigation centers on the antebellum period.

With one exception the earliest coterie of American poets, the Hartford Wits, arouses little critical comment in The Edinburgh. Although some of Humphrey's work was received with favor in England, The Edinburgh does not mention him at all. As early as 1807 Timothy Dwight is referred to as "the growth

of a country where only the coarser sorts of industry yet flourish."¹⁰¹ In 1810, however, he and Barlow are accorded, perhaps ironically, the first place in American Literature.¹⁰² Seven years later Dwight and Barlow are mentioned in a distant manner ¹⁰³ and in 1824 both are compared with Shakespeare and Milton, much to the advantage of the English poets.¹⁰⁴

Although Barlow's The Columbiad is most often pointed out by other British journals as "an example of ill-conceived, over-ambitious and bombastic literary effort",¹⁰⁵ the long review which appears in The Edinburgh is comparatively favorable.¹⁰⁶ The article opens with an idea upon which The Edinburgh repeatedly insists:

The truth...is that though the American government be new, the people is in all respects as the people of England; and their want of literature is to be ascribed, not to the immaturity of their progress in civilization, but to the nature of the occupations in which they are generally engaged.¹⁰⁷

But The Edinburgh can not reach the conclusion that Mr. Barlow will ever become "the Homer of his country." The reasons advanced are threefold: first, those that lie in the nature of Barlow's work itself; second, those that are to be found in his environment; and, third, those that are inherent in the man himself. Without a doubt, it is a great handicap to a poet to exist in an unliterary surrounding which has little time for the type of work he is doing and consequently little interest. Some poets are able to overcome such a handicap, but not Mr. Barlow, and herein is the tragedy of his failure as an epic poet. It is easy to see that he is "a man of a plain, strong, and resolute understanding--a very good republican, and a considerable despiser of all sorts of prejudices and illusions; but without any play or vivacity of genius, or delicacy of taste." He is not deficient in culture and not unread in poetry, but he lacks "the higher elements of a poet in his composition." It is for this reason that he makes such an "injudicious choice and unfortunate application of the models" which lie before him.

He is caught only by what is glaring and exaggerated; and seems to have no perception of the finer and less obtrusive graces which constitute all the lasting and deep-felt charms of poetry. In his cumbrous and inflated style, he is constantly mistaking hyperbole for grandeur, and supplying the place of simplicity with huge patches of mere tameness and vulgarity. This curious intermixture, indeed, of extreme homeliness and flatness, with a sort of turbulent and bombastic elevation, is the great characteristic of the work before us. Instead of aspiring to emulate the sublime composure of Milton, or the natural eloquence and flowing nervousness of Dryden, Mr. Barlow had bethought him of transferring to epic poetry the light, sparkling and tawdry diction of Darwin.¹⁰⁸

But he is more verbose and less spirited than Darwin and reminds the reader of him only by "his characteristic defects." So runs the reasoning of The Edinburgh, constituting the best general estimate of Barlow we have found anywhere in British criticism.

But The Edinburgh does not stop here. It points out that The Columbiad is crowded with both names and incidents but has neither characters nor action. "The most important personages appear but once upon the scene, and then pass away and are forgotten." In other words, the relation of the story

partakes more of the nature of a procession than of a drama. River gods, sachems, majors of militia, all enter at one side of his stage, and go off at the other, never to return...The rivers Potowmack and Delaware, those fluent and venerable personages, both act and talk a great deal more than Jefferson or Franklin.¹⁰⁹

This is a point well taken, but there is something much more annoying,

the whole history, past, present, and future, of America, and inclusively of the whole world, is delivered in the clumsy and revolting form of a miraculous vision; and thus truth is not only blended with falsehood and fancy, but is presented to the mind under the mask of the grossest and most palpable fiction.¹⁰⁹

Barlow's claim that such a method gives "great interest and dignity to the story" and enables "him to observe the unities of time, place, and action, more rigidly than any other poet,---the whole action consisting in what takes place between Columbus and Hesper, which must be supposed to occupy but a few hours"---is not accepted by The Edinburgh at all. The method is "cheap and ingenuous."

Extracts are quoted at length from the account of the origin of the Mississippi, from a description of a modern battle, and from the picture of a sea fight which is given "with a great amount of detailed and bombastic bloodshed, although the first four lines" are "laudable."¹¹⁰ This conclusion is odd, for these lines are by no means so "laudable" as various other sections of the poem.

Although the English reviewer naturally feels that generally when Barlow proceeds "to immortalize the worthies of the revolutionary war his inferiority to Homer" becomes "rather more conspicuous", it is conceded that the final surrender of Cornwallis is "perhaps among the most unexceptionable passages in this division of the poem;¹¹¹ but "His picture of modern War, spitting out spikes, muskets, and mortars, is preposterous." The most absurd portion of the whole poem, however, is that "in which the river Delaware is represented as opposing Washington's passage, and calling in the aid of Frost to render his waves innavigable. The gross stupidity of the fiction can only be surpassed by the heavy turbulences of the execution."¹¹²

The philosophic or prophetic part of the poem in which the author, reviewing the past destiny of man, ventures to delineate his

future progress, is far superior in our estimation to the narrative or historical part. His retrospects have far more breadth and dignity, and his anticipations far more spirit than his chronicles.113

From this later portion several quotations are left, almost without comment, to the judgment of the reader. The review closes with a summary and a final word of criticism which deserve quotation because of their evident attempt to be fair:

As a great national poem it has enormous---inexplicable, and in some respects, intolerable faults. But the author's talents are evidently respectable. And, severely as we have been obliged to speak of his taste and his diction in a great part of the volume, we have no hesitation in saying, that we consider him as a giant, in comparison with some or many of the puling and paltry rhymsters, who disgrace our English literature by their occasional success. As an Epic poet, we do think his case is desperate; but, as a philosophical and moral poet, we think he has talents of no ordinary value; and, if he would pay some attention to purity of style, and simplicity of taste,---which is not yet to be found, we are afraid, even among the better educated of the Americans,---we have no doubt that he might produce something which English poets would envy, and English critics applaud.114

Although The Edinburgh feels certain that The Columbiad as it is will not meet with success in England because it has too many glaring faults to allow its merits to be seen, Mr. Barlow is assured that it is doubtful whether any long poem will ever be popular again in Europe. There is only one thing which may sell the book in England and this is the "extraordinary beauty of the paper, printing and embellishments." The reviewer does not recall having seen a

handsomer book even from the presses of his own country.¹¹⁵

In a famous article,¹¹⁶ published in 1820 and entitled "Dispositions of England and America", which is really an answer to Walsh's¹ indignant remonstrance against what he called the unfair critical attitude of The Edinburgh, Jeffrey again reiterates his charges against Barlow and makes an attempt to substantiate them. He maintains that the criticism of Barlow in a previous article (which we have just summarized) was entirely "good natured and very innocent." To be sure, some of his manifest faults were pointed out, but the "castigation of this gentleman was certainly not dictated by national animosity" (as Walsh contended) and any serious person should easily perceive this. If the work had been published in England, the same defects would have been pointed out. The reason for paying so much attention to what was felt to be a bad book is that

a handsome quarto of verse, from a country which produces so few, necessarily attracted ...attention more strongly than if it had appeared among ourselves; secondly, that its faults were of so peculiar and amusing a kind, as to call for animadversion rather than neglect; and thirdly, what no reader of Mr. W's remarks would indeed anticipate, that in spite of these faults, the book actually had merits that entitled it to notice, and that a considerable part of our article is accordingly employed in bringing these merits into view.¹¹⁶

Walsh is reminded that the review in question calls attention to the fact that Barlow's "versification was generally both soft and sonorous, and that there were many passages of rich and vigorous description, and some that might lay claim even to the praise of magnificence."¹¹⁷

The only other American poet to be given so much attention as Barlow is Edgar Allan Poe, whose work, with few exceptions, was disparaged by

British critics from the very beginning.¹¹⁸ The review of his works which appears in 1858 is the most unfair estimate of an American author to be found in the pages of The Edinburgh. It seems to be based on Griswold's notorious treatment of Poe in the former's edition of the poet's works, tempered slightly by the more favourable appreciations by Lowell and Willis which accompany it. In fact, the reviewer is so much incensed and disgusted with Poe the man that he has great difficulty in seeing him as a literary genius. He opens with the startling and rather inconsequential statement, "Edgar Allan Poe was incontestably one of the most worthless persons of whom we have any record in the world of letters."¹¹⁹ Other authors, the review continues, have been as improvident, others have been as drunken and as dissipated, and a few may have been as treacherous and ungrateful, "but he seems to have succeeded in attracting and combining, in his own person, all the floating vices which genius had hitherto shown itself capable of grasping in its widest and most eccentric orbit." A large portion of the article deals with Poe's depravity and with those facts in his biography which seem to demonstrate his utter moral worthlessness. He is charged with being "a blackguard of undeniable mark", "a beggar", "a vagabond", "a slanderer of a woman", and "a delirious drunken pauper of a common hospital." He is "avoided by all respectable men" because he has "outraged his benefactor", "deceived his friends", and "sacrificed his love." In short, his biography satisfies the reviewer that "the lowest abyss of moral imbecility and disrepute was never attained until he came, and stood forth a warning to the times to come."¹²⁰ He is not to be sympathized with because of his unhappiness, for he caused it himself by his excesses. His face is not even so beautiful as his friends would have us think.

Upon ourselves the impression made is very different. It seems rather to confirm the opinion derived from his history and writings. It seems to us pinched, painful, jealous, irritable, and weak; and is altogether wanting in that frank, manly, generous character which takes the fancy of the beholder at first glance.¹²¹

Though The Edinburgh does not like Poe the man, it makes a not altogether successful effort to lay aside this antipathy long enough to examine his work. It admits that he possessed "rare qualities and endowments, the demonstration of which has entitled him to no mean place on the rolls of the Temple of Fame." But it is not in poetry that he excels, for, with the exception of "The Raven"

his verses do not differ materially from others of the same time. They are neither very good nor very bad. They do not exhibit much depth of graphic power, and but little tenderness. Nor do they in fact possess any of those distinguishing qualities which lift a man up beyond his contemporaries. The blank verse is not good; but some of the small pieces have a smoothness and liquid flow that are pleasant enough.¹²²

"To Helen", for example, is "full of promise!" But of all his work "The Raven", which is quoted in its entirety, is the unquestioned masterpiece; and, although it is characteristically gloomy, it deserves "to be remembered by all lovers of verse." The Edinburgh states further that it is not certain whether Poe manufactured it, as he claimed in The Philosophy of Composition. The reviewer can not refrain from calling attention to Poe's so-called plagiarism from Longfellow, concluding that while he has entire reliance on Mr. Longfellow's word, he places "none whatever on the assertion of Edgar Poe."¹²³

There is a softer note toward the end of the review, a statement which seems almost apologetic for the previous severity in portraying the moral depravity of Poe; it is almost a question as to the reliability of the information on which the critic's opinion has been based.

We say all this very unwillingly for we admire sincerely many things that Mr. Poe has produced. We are willing to believe that there may have been...an amiable

side to his character. We learn from Mr. Willis, that at one time in the later portion of his life, 'he was invariably punctual and industrious...' The testimony of that gentleman and of Mr. Lowell ---both men of high literary repute--- tempted us at first to suspend our opinion of the author; but the weight of evidence on the darker side proved overwhelming, and left us no choice but to admit the facts upon record and to stigmatise with our most decided reprobation those misdeeds that seem to have constituted almost the only history of his short career--- Perhaps, after all we are only copying the roughnesses that were so conspicuous on the surface of Poe's character and would naturally attract the attention of his biographers in the first instance...Perhaps the greatest is behind, for no man is thoroughly evil...

He was the chief sufferer from his own faults and he gave the pleasure of his writings to thousands;...fortunately for Poe his personal history will be less read than his stories.¹²⁴

Aside from the foregoing consideration of Barlow and Poe and a post bellum estimate of Lowell, The Edinburgh does not pay extended attention to any one American poet. Its general attitude must be built up from the brief and sometimes detached statements made concerning certain authors, as well as from its failure to recognize other authors at all.

The principal fault which The Edinburgh consistently points out in American verse is that it has no distinctive character of its own. If the reader expects to find compositions modeled carefully after British patterns, he can "accept the new poetry with pleasure and be persuaded of the talent, taste and sensibility which has already in America devoted itself, and with success, to poetry,¹²⁵ but the searcher after the distinctly national in setting and mood is

disappointed on almost every occasion, for the character of American productions varies little indeed from that of the English. In fact, The Edinburgh finds the difference between English "poetry and that of our nearest continental neighbours" to be "a thousand times greater than between the literature of Old England and that of New." It is astonished at the degree with which "the result has been influenced by the study of English models; and how little there is to remind us that the Atlantic rolls between." If it were not for the occasional glimpses of native setting, which in themselves do not compare in "consummate truth and finish" with, for instance, "Campbell's beautiful cabinet picture", an English reader would never be aware that he is not reading a collection by a modern English poet. The only true transatlantic quality which is discoverable during the first thirty years of the Nineteenth Century is the "occasional allusion to Indian traditions and superstitions"¹²⁶ But this in itself, and in fact any aspect of nature as setting, no matter how great its sublimity, cannot compete with the "sublimity of moral associations" and these, The Edinburgh insists, grow only with time. America is not old enough to write great poetry. "A past of fifty years is too short for poetical purposes, though it may begin to afford material for other forms. America already has accomplished marvels. But a national, particularly a poetical, literature is the product of centuries. It is the final sum of leisure, luxury and "a long and picturesque train of old recollections and associations. Making full allowance for all the hindrances which poetry has had to suffer in America, amid the cares of gain, the noise, the bustle, the distractions of agricultural, commercial, and political pursuits which so universally, and in some measure necessarily, engage the undivided attention of the population of this new country, The Edinburgh regards it as quite remarkable that any progress at all has been made. But "no ghost", it continues, "was ever seen in North America." The inspired poet's tongue must have an echo in the state of public feelings, or of involuntary belief, or it soon grows harsh or mute. In America, they are "so well policed, so exempt from the knowledge of fraud or

force, so free from the assaults of the flesh and the devil, that in pure hardness they hoot the Beggar's Opera from the stage.¹²⁷

Not only is there a lack of the indigenous quality in American verse, but The Edinburgh fails to find one writer upon whom it can lay its hand and say, "This is a great poet." Some of the American versifiers have "tenderness, imagination and occasional sublimity" but all lack that combination of "quick sensibility, strong conception, and great force and apparent felicity of expression" which constitute poetical genius. It is impossible to discover anywhere "that great assurance which is always so evident in even the slightest things of a Milton or a Shakespeare."

At first this seems like a very unjust and careless conclusion, for had not Bryant¹²⁸ appeared above the horizon when this statement was printed, and had not Poe made two undeniable bids for fame in his first two volumes of verse?¹²⁹ The unpartisan reader cannot fail, however, to admit in general the wisdom and accuracy of The Edinburgh's contention. It claims that no great poetical mind has appeared. For Bryant and Poe are not real candidates to satisfy the stern qualifications laid down by British critics.

Without doubt, The Edinburgh admits two or three times, master minds will arise as in other countries

but not suddenly, we hope, even for her own sake, for nothing is permanent which is not gradual...But...that day is yet distant... far too distant, we think, to excite either fear or jealousy on our part, or to warp our judgment in regard to their productions.¹³⁰

Before that time arrives, the interest of The Edinburgh has been drawn to other fields and it ceases to pass oracular judgment on American bards, although it comes near to bestowing the accolade on Lowell and Holmes.

It may be because of this failure to locate poets preeminently worthy of its critical attention that the great quarterly is so strangely silent concerning many names otherwise in the British eye.

Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Morton's rimed narrative, Cuabi, wins comment favourable and otherwise from various English periodicals, and influences the works of more than one European writer; but The Edinburgh has nothing whatsoever to say concerning it. This is direct evidence of critical acumen, for the work is entirely inane and trite. The work of the Reverend Dr. John Blair Linn, who engages in controversial fisticuffs with Priestly, elicits astonishing extremes of opinion from various foreign journals not accustomed to pay much attention to American fine arts. William Moore Smith's Poems on Several Occasions is particularly fortunate in earning the favorable comment of some magazines which later grow rather acidulous in their remarks about us. But The Edinburgh has no review of any of these and does not make even indirect comment. It is not so strange that Freneau is entirely ignored, for he was not recognized as anything but a political satirist even in his own country until comparatively late. The Edinburgh probably does not know him at all as a lyrical poet, for, as Professor Cairns has pointed out, the early editions of his works probably had small circulation in America and doubtless never reached England at all.¹³¹

Many American poets are mentioned briefly and with little comment. Chandos Leigh is patronizingly described as "a poet in whom one could hardly expect the rich rimes that characterized the works of former poets."¹³² John G. Whittier's name appears once only and then at the very end of a long review of a collection of American verse, where the reviewer expresses regret that he has insufficient space to enable him to linger "a little" on this poet,¹³³ as well as on Edward Everett, Lucretia Davidson, and others.¹³⁴ The poems of Lydia Sigourney are labeled as "pleasing and breathing a fine strain of devotional feeling" but "not peculiarly striking."¹³⁵ Before the Civil War the only reference to James Russell Lowell ¹²⁰ is with regard to appreciations written by him and by Willis and appended to Griswold's edition of Poe's works, which omission is surprising, for Lowell had published two volumes of verse, as well as several separate poems, such as The Vision of Sir Launfal.

There are those to whom slightly more attention is given. Thomas Green Fessenden,¹³⁶ "the Hudibras of America"¹³⁷ attracted a great deal of interest in England, only a slight amount of which is reflected in the pages of The Edinburgh, where two of his worst quatrains are quoted to show that the fine arts are at a low ebb on the American side of the Atlantic.¹⁰¹ From Timothy Flint, with whom The Edinburgh is already familiar, "Lines on Passing the Grave of My Sister" is quoted and called "a composition of great tenderness and beauty." The Edinburgh reviewers find something in these stanzas "inexpressibly pathetic and mournful"...such as any British poet might well be proud of.¹³⁴ The only extract made from William W. Longfellow is his "Woods in Winter", which The Edinburgh calls remarkably graphic "producing a feeling like Shakespeare's 'When icicles hang on the wall', till we almost begin with Hob 'to blow the nail'". But in the same breath the reviewer confesses that he has not before heard of Longfellow and exclaims, "Phoebus, what a name!"¹³⁵

To "Woods in Winter", N.P. Willis's "Saturday Afternoon" is offered as "a pendant." This particular selection is called "natural and touching, bringing together in such vivid juxtaposition the associations of childhood and age." It is beyond comprehension how the creator of such a little gem could have written a monstrosity like "Parrhasius", which seems to The Edinburgh "precisely such an effusion as might be supposed to emanate from a poetical butcher--in Bedlam."¹³⁵ From James Gates Percival "The Grave of the Indian Chief" is quoted in toto. With his "Lines to an Eagle", which were more ambitious but less successful, The Edinburgh is already familiar, since they had appeared in an English journal. His cast of mind is not unlike that of William Cullen Bryant, resulting in a mournful simplicity and little pomp or energy of thought or style. The reviewer praises briefly the little poem by Percival entitled "The Deserted Wife."

A partiality for the works of John G.C. Brainard over those of Bryant is confessed for they seem "to have in them more of the warm spirit of poetry."¹³⁸ Although Brainard died young, his intellect

was of a more masculine character than Bryant's. "He was careless and in finish of versification far inferior to Bryant, who was not himself remarkable for extreme solicitude in that matter; but even in this carelessness, which presents the thought in its full and undiluted form, there is often a charm."¹³⁹ The melancholy, wayward character of his poetry is clearly indicated in his lines which begin, "The dead leaves strew the forest-walk", which not unpleasantly remind the reviewer of Shelley's "Lines Written in Dejection near Naples."

But, although The Edinburgh prefers the "warm spirit of poetry" shown in the lines of Brainard, to the "charm" of Bryant, it admits that the latter was a better versifier and "likely to be the more general favourite." Because of the position which he held in American Literature along with Richard Henry Dana, more space is given to consideration of his work. Several of his pieces have already appeared in British journals previous to 1835. His "Lines to a Waterfowl", "After a Tempest", and "To the Evening Wind" are already known by The Edinburgh and are admittedly "beautiful." In fact, all of his work is "pleasing" and some of it "exquisitely so." The Edinburgh, however, takes issue with the critic who had called Bryant a "bold" poet. This term seems singularly inapplicable to the mind of Bryant, which is far more remarkable for tenderness and delicacy than for power--even in his pictures of inanimate nature, and still more in his delightful studies of human feelings. His pleasure seems to be in conjuring visions of domestic tenderness 'of simplest mirth and tears'--calm household scenes, "where the current of life glides by, neither overshadowed by gloom nor fretted into agitation."¹⁴⁰ All of his poetry is full of "sweet sympathy with Nature's minutest beauties, as well as her more magnificent." He draws a moral even from a flower, and The Edinburgh quotes "To a Fringed Gentian" to support its contention. Three years earlier than this, issue is taken also with Mrs. Trollope for the "sally of mere impertinence" with which she had commented upon Bryant's works, and in this former case the reviewer offers "To the Evening Wind" for his readers to pass judgment upon.¹⁴¹

Whereas the individual characteristic of Bryant is a "pensive, tender melancholy", that of Dana is a "wild force and energy." He has much more strength and grasp but also more "irregularity and inequality." He aims higher but he does "not always reach his mark."¹⁴² Yet although there is in Dana this lack of balance and harmony, The Edinburgh feels certain that there is a better "chance of his producing, in times to come, a great work" than in the case of most other American poets. He possesses many of the elements of a great poet; and if he can learn to temper his "tendency to exaggeration", which is his greatest fault, and to be more compact, works of great promise may result. The reviewer finds "The Tale of Buccaneer" "a ghastly story of the sea, of murder and superstitious terror", but withal a "very striking poem", because of its rich, picturesque beauty and solemn description. For lack of space, however, "The Little Beach Bird" is quoted instead as representative of Dana's work.

After the Civil War, for reasons already pointed out, there is a dearth of comment on American poetry in the pages of The Edinburgh. Of the few poets discussed James Russell Lowell receives by far the most attention. From 1850 to 1900 The Edinburgh finds no other writer known to the English speaking race that arrests more attention than he. His greatness does not lie in any single branch of human endeavour but in his "remarkable efforts and results in various fields." "As a journalist in the best and widest sense, as an essayist and critic, and in some degree as a poet, he will long be memorable."¹⁴³ And no higher honor can be ascribed to his memory by The Edinburgh than the fact that Lowell did much to hasten the re-establishing of more cordial relations between England and America,

relations which it may well be hoped will not again be disturbed. He represented the quick, sympathetic temperament of the American people, eager for sympathy, susceptible of its denial ... In a time of war, tumult, and international unrest, it may be that on both sides of the Atlantic his name will be respected for helping to make America and Great Britain more closely united by national sympathies

springing from a better knowledge of each other, and from the ties of a common literature.¹⁴³

One other fundamental characteristic which endears Lowell to The Edinburgh is that all through his writings he is continually lamenting that the beloved land of his birth is "barren of venerable associations" and always he is "claiming his birth-right as heir to the intellectual triumphs transmitted through an English ancestry."¹⁴⁷ It is this combination of patriotism and reverence for the treasures of the old world that The Edinburgh finds to be such a laudable and likable part of Lowell's character.

As a poet his fame rests on his metrical satires. "The Fable for Critics" is a sparkling "jeu d'esprit" written hurriedly for his own amusement and with no thought of publication. Although it is clever, The Edinburgh feels that it is "almost as little fitted for publicity as the unreserved self-confidences of a private journal."¹⁴⁵ One of the best sketches in it is that of Bryant; "nor is that of Lowell himself the worst or the least candid."

Although the most powerful serious poem ever written by Lowell is "Extreme Unction", "that terrible picture of a remorseful deathbed, when the dying man in his hopeless agony is haunted by spectres of his hopeful youth and his fond early ideals",¹⁴⁶ it is to "The Biglow Papers" that The Edinburgh accords the laurel of its praise. "The very fact that these poems are written in a dialect, that they realize types of people, gives them a truth which adds to their completeness and their enduring quality." They will remain Lowell's

most permanent addition to American Literature. They are animated with the life of a great mass of the people; they are often a passionate and yet humorous expression of contemporary thought. The writer is voicing his age, and he is in earnest.¹⁴⁷

Their comparative smallness makes them even more striking. They are distinctly unique in literature.

In the defence of the New England dialects Lowell has written a "masterly piece of learned philological work, redeemed from anything like dulness by perpetual flashes of humour." And it amuses The Edinburgh to reveal his demonstration that many of the words and phrases which are regarded as vulgar colloquialisms "are really good and pure old English. When Mr. Biglow seems most familiar and homely, he may be speaking Chaucer or Spenser." It is in "The Biglow Papers" that one finds the true metal, nothing forced and nothing weak, far removed from those poetical efforts which, though they show cultivation and quick feeling, are without character."¹⁴⁸ In "The Courtin'" particularly, Lowell has shown how well he can represent "the feeling of the country people of New England." "It has a simplicity, a charm, and a truth which makes it of greater worth than any of his more general works. It is a picture of New England life."¹⁴⁷

Toward the Second Series of "The Biglow Papers" The Edinburgh is not so favorably disposed, being inclined to pronounce them "comparatively a failure", although in the political portions the author seems to have "caught the feeling of an important section of the American people." Lowell himself points out that self-consciousness has been growing on him. What was the strength of the first series, their "intense earnestness", in the second series becomes a weakness. "Lowell brought so much passion to his work when he realized its importance in political warfare, that he is sometimes hurried into excessive violence."¹⁵²

The big mistake, however, that Lowell committed was that he did not do more which could be regarded as "distinctively American work." The Edinburgh voices the feeling that he should have given more of his time "to the picturing of his own people." He could easily have been the poet of New England. Although the average reader is inclined to associate Lowell with books and libraries, platforms and drawing-rooms (which is his own fault because he has written too little on rural subjects) nevertheless, he has spent nearly all his life in the country, and almost all in the same locality. The best example of Lowell's

verse to prove that he always "wrote lovingly and truthfully of visible nature" is "Beaver Brook." In so striking a poem as this, however, we are more impressed by the personality of the author than with the individuality of the poem itself. Without doubt, it was the practice of "supplying verse to current literature" which hurt his fame as a poet. He wrote too fast and too often.

There is a great quantity of agreeable verse ---feeling for natural beauty, apperception of the undertone of life. It is as walking through delightful but not remarkable scenery---we are never displeased, but we are never deeply moved.¹⁴⁹

It is Lowell's chief defect that he never "stood still; his mind was always on the move." Yet this fatal facility of his is remarkable. Emerson once refused to review Lowell's poem, "The Cathedral" although he liked it, because in order to write it he was sure Lowell had had "to pump." But The Edinburgh is certain Lowell never has "to pump."

He could turn every subject, grave or gay, every emotion, every glint of humour into rhyme, and, as he said of Wordsworth, 'he wrote too much to write always well' Such a faculty, unusual and delightful, needed to be carefully watched; the course of Lowell's life, so far from confining it, gave it play, and prevented that perfect form, that strength of mental supply, without which poetry is not, and a man becomes chiefly a versifier.¹⁵⁰

Though much that he wrote is thin, he has "the poetic faculty", a charming fancy, and much of his verse will live because of its sheer inspiration. Should we test his work by the classics, as he would have wished us to do, "the verdict of posterity will be that he does not live among the great poets of the nineteenth century."¹⁵⁰ Nowhere do we find the "gemlike art, the perfect form" of Tennyson; nowhere do we find the "classical feeling"

of Arnold; nor the wisdom of Browning. But one of the most complimentary things that can be said about Lowell, is that he always "enobles duty, exalts morality, and will listen to no compromise with truth."¹⁴⁶

The Edinburgh is more interested in the colorful life of Oliver Wendell Holmes than it is in his work. The good fortune of his genealogical history, the extraordinary felicity of his home life and training, are not the least remarkable features of his character. Holmes will be remembered "chiefly because of his marked individuality, beauty of character, genial humour, brilliant wit, cheerful philosophy, and charm of style. His life motto may be summed up in his well-known couplet:

Leave what you've done for what you have to do,
Don't be 'consistent', but be simply true."¹⁵¹

But important as his life work was as a medical man and genial personality, it is "as a literary man that his name will go 'down the ringing grooves of change', and claim attention from all lovers of literature and life." It may be, on The Edinburgh's evidence, that he had a wider audience than any other writer in America.

for the reason that the conversational style he adopted in his best-known works was not only a new feature in literature, but was the means that brought him into more friendly relations with his readers.¹⁵¹

Perhaps no other American poet more ably expressed his native land's "innate freedom, patriotism, its aspiring resolve."

But it is not as a poet who voices consistently national sentiment and feeling that Holmes will be longest remembered. It will be for his unique vers d'occasion."

Here his masterful touch is unmistakable; he is on safe and sure ground where he is an undisputed master. Perhaps no poet during the past century wrote so many verses of this character.¹⁵²

The Edinburgh Review asks whether there is anyone who can read "The Boys" without realizing that Holmes himself was a boy and remained one all his life. Although his heart was in close sympathy with all "that related to the past of life and thought", his "intellectual outlook was marked by a cheerfulness and sense of humour as rich as it was rare." Such poems as "My Aunt", "The Dilemma", and "Grandmother's Story of Bunker Hill" are rare combinations of the story-teller's art and the ability to portray characters delightfully. "The Deacon's Masterpiece" is perhaps the "best and most charming expression of American humour." "Dorothy Q" in both thought and expression, "with its subtle touch of light and shade", appeals to "all that is highest in poetry."¹⁵³

But there are also imaginative flights in his pages appealing to the highest and noblest instincts. Such is his own favorite "The Chambered Nautilus" which is "a poetic gem." One of the most touching poems in the language is "The Last Leaf." We are reminded that "so fastidious a critic as Edgar Allan Poe" copied it and praised it highly and that Lincoln memorized it and declared the fourth verse to be "one of the most pathetic passages in poetic literature."¹⁵²

Holmes began by writing verse, but did not learn "in suffering what he thought in song. Instead he calmly pursued the even tenor of his way, and only once did he wave the star-spangled banner in a way to attract attention."¹⁵² This one occasion was, of course, "Old Ironsides" which has such an exultant ring, that it has been echoed throughout the United States.

Any poet would be proud to be the author of verses like the above; they have the true ring of the poet whose soul is on fire over a national wrong, an act of vandalism unworthy of a great people. As the first poem in his published work, it is an indication of the poet's quality, and puts the reader in sympathy with him at once.¹⁵⁴

In all his poetry Holmes touches equally well the springs of laughter and the source of tears. He has a unique style and does not model his manner or matter on any other writer.

Holmes became almost the last surviving member of the brilliant band of writers who were his friends and contemporaries; and he was distinguished chiefly, even in his old age, for carrying the buoyancy of spirit for which he was particularly noted in his earlier years.¹⁵³

Indeed such a poet makes The Edinburgh inquire why no office for a Poet Laureate has been established in America.

The only other two poets who are mentioned by The Edinburgh are Lanier and Whitman. Lanier's most perfect poem is said to be "Sunrise."¹⁵⁵ No other poet in modern times has wrought with more intensity "the rapture of the earth lover." Whitman is accused of falling like all other American nature poets into the "snare of romanticism and infected earth", though his lament for Lincoln, one of the most striking of his verses, is unusual.¹⁵⁶

Generally speaking, The Edinburgh feels that American poetry is distinguished by promise rather than by performance. It admits that America has already done a great deal, but it feels sure that it is destined to do much more. In fact, it ventures to prophesy that "when there are already so many good poets, the advent of a great one, even with all impediments from the engrossing interests of commerce or the turmoil of politics, is hardly likely to be very distant."¹⁵⁴ Though it is unable to lay its hand on any of the poets discussed and say, "Here is a great poet", "there are many to whom the praises of tenderness and imagination, and some to whom that of occasional sublimity would be most cordially awarded", and whenever the great poet does arrive, there will be no jealousy or resentment.

Could America rival England tomorrow;
were her rolls of fame as crowded with bright
names as our own; could she point to some
masterpiece on which the stamp of eternity
was as visibly impressed as on the Dramas of
Shakespeare or the Epic of Milton, we have
the most complete conviction that, instead
of exciting a feeling of jealousy and disap-
pointment, her triumph would be hailed in
Britain with delight---as that of a kindred
nation, sprung from ourselves.¹²⁵

But that day never comes, for The Edinburgh shifts its
attention to matters less literary and more utilitarian,
and so much time is lost in political disputation and
economic exposition at home that little opportunity is
left for the fine arts, particularly those which begin
to flourish across the Atlantic.

One feels safe, however, in contending
that a sustained judicial attitude would have marked
such criticism if it had been forthcoming. There is
no reason whatsoever for thinking that The Edinburgh
in a more modern setting would have changed its policy
of impartiality and sympathy. Its recent death¹⁵⁷ is
more like the passing of a helpful friend than of a
hostile critic.

Language and Prose

Great Britain has always been convinced of a conspiracy in the United States to pollute the purity of the English language. The Edinburgh's share in this attitude after 1802 manifests itself by scattered but deep rumblings. The first of these is to be heard in the attack upon the American Mineralogical Journal¹⁵⁸ because its language was too American. In 1819 it is recorded that Fearon⁹ gave us credit for speaking almost as good English as the English themselves, and in the same article there is a brief comment on the "frequent and improper applications of words used in the back country, with a few New England phrases."¹⁵⁹ In 1829 Cooper is cynically paraphrased as saying that "already they speak their language better than any other people, and in another generation or two, far more reasonable English will be spoken than is at present in existence." But in the same review attention is called to Hall¹⁵ whose adventures lead The Edinburgh to the conclusion that "the Americans must surely have changed the meaning of many words in the English language, to account for the difficulty he frequently experienced in making himself understood."¹⁶⁰ Barlow is accused of writing in "a language utterly unknown to the prose or verse" of England.¹⁶¹ In brief, with other English Journals, The Edinburgh Review feels that there was too hasty a tendency in America to introduce new words and to change the use and meanings of words in use already.

Towards fiction in the new country The Edinburgh is favorably inclined. It insists that it was the first in England to recognise the "exquisite quaintness and subdued humour" of Washington Irving, and has much further to say in praise of him.^{162, 180, 181, 182} Whereas almost all of the early magazine reviews of Charles Brockden Brown are hostile, The Edinburgh is careful to point out his excellencies.¹⁶³ Our reviewers consider Cooper a "deservedly celebrated novelist,"¹⁶⁴ but of course, when compared with Scott he sank into the insignificance of a second rate novelist. Surprisingly little is said about The Scarlet Letter.

The reviewers seem to feel that the chief criticism that will be brought against the author is that he did not paint Puritan intolerance in black enough colours.¹⁶⁵ The Edinburgh feels that it can trace Poe's inspiration "in a great measure to the writing of William Godwin and Charles Brockden Brown."¹⁶⁶ It is admitted that Poe, as a fiction writer, possessed "much subtlety of thought; an acute reasoning faculty; an imagination of a gloomy character; and a remarkable power of analysis."¹⁶⁷ One serious fault which Poe possessed was an entire lack of humour. More space is devoted to Uncle Tom's Cabin than to any other one piece of American fiction. Its wide sale is marvelled at and its moral influence seems no less remarkable.¹⁶⁸

But the "map of America is not historical", complains The Edinburgh.¹⁶³ And for this reason works of fiction did not "take root in it." Fiction, to be good for anything, "must not be in the author's mind but belong to the age in which he lives." This accounted for the success of Uncle Tom and the comparative failure of Wieland and "A Gordon Pym." "The genius of America was essentially mechanical and modern."

In 1857 a reviewer expresses his surprise that such excellent histories of Catholic Spain have been written by Protestant Englishmen like Irving, Prescott and Ticknor.¹⁶⁹ The Edinburgh can not refrain from expressing its heartfelt admiration "of the heroic, the noble philosophy, which could sustain the cheerful vigour of mind necessary for such tasks" as the writing of The Conquest of Mexico.¹⁷⁰ Bancroft also is particularly liked because of his "kindly spirit", generosity, and "novelty of information."¹⁷¹ His only principal fault was that he was too often jealous of his country's fame. When The Edinburgh hears that Cooper has written a Naval history of the United States,¹⁷² it looks forward with anxiety and pleasure: anxiety because of Mr. Cooper's internationally notorious antipathy to England; pleasure, because it feels that "Mr. Cooper's literary talents" are so well-known, and have been exercised with such peculiar success in nautical fiction, that it was natural to expect they would be displayed with equal effect in history."¹⁷³

Concerning other pieces of American history there are not many references. But one can not help noticing that each historical work is weighed for its merits alone and national spirit is kept in the background.

In the case of most books of travels and collections of letters The Edinburgh maintains a discreet silence. To the letters of Crèvecoeur a little attention is paid.¹⁷⁴ Several books of travel are listed for review and passed by with bare mention. But John Adams' Letters on Silesia attract considerable attention. The reviewer uses them as an excuse for some mildly derogatory remarks in general on American Literature, but admits that they show some qualities which make them "a tolerable companion for a very short tour."¹⁷⁶ When Willis' Pencillings by the Way came out in 1833 he is already known to The Edinburgh as the author of a "volume of pleasing poetry."¹⁷⁷

Most of the early pieces of miscellaneous American prose appeared in newspapers and magazines and for this reason did not come to the attention of English critics. A few lonely writers, however, are accorded brief notice in The Edinburgh from time to time. Among these are Francis Hopkinson,¹⁰² Thomas Jefferson,¹⁰⁵ and Benjamin Franklin.¹⁷⁸ Concerning the critical essays of Poe, The Edinburgh expresses itself as thinking no more of him as a critic than it does of him as a creative writer.¹⁷⁹ William Ellery Channing touches "lofty keys, but their compass is not wide."⁶⁶ Although it experiences some difficulty in judging the letters of Franklin,¹⁷⁵ The Edinburgh feels that the Americans can afford to live for half a century on his reputation.⁵⁹ "It can not be expected that he should write with a style of extraordinary grace and polish, for his style was of his own manufacturing, based upon his own judgment and his occasional reading"; but "nothing can be more perfectly and beautifully adapted to its object, than most of Dr. Franklin's composition."¹⁸³

The Edinburgh is sure that the "universal diffusion of education" in America is in part owing to the fact that everybody reads the newspapers,¹⁸⁴

but the scurrility of the American presses is inveighed against.^{185, 186, 187, 188} It is in the reviews and the periodicals of North America that one has to look for a "higher idea of the tendencies and prospects of American literature." The enormous number of these attract attention in 1829, but very little attention is called to these in any journal other than The Edinburgh which pays the North American Review the unusual compliment of being "the best and most promising production of the press of that country that has ever come to our hands."¹⁸⁰

Arts and Sciences

That particular manifestation of culture, known as the Fine Arts, and its first cousin, Science, did not take up their permanent abode in America until comparatively late in the country's development. This fact early travellers and the more critical of the reviewers were quick to note. There may be found in the pages of The Edinburgh varying degrees of comment on this deficiency in America's make-up, ranging from the trivial statement of Barrow¹⁸⁹ in 1806 that America had produced few works of genius because of "the continual teasing of the mosquitoes"¹⁹⁰ to the notorious challenge of Smith¹⁹¹ in 1820. Ashe¹⁰ is typically cynical about American culture, and in 1841 The Edinburgh admits that M. de Tocqueville¹⁹² is probably right in saying that there is little independence of thought in the new nation. Even James Fenimore Cooper admits in 1829 that it is too early to expect profound training in the sciences at the American universities.

In 1854 The Edinburgh expresses itself somewhat like this: so far every man has been needed in America at the social wheel and there has been no time for "elegant idleness." Now, however, [i.e., in 1854] that wealth is on the increase, and a certain leisure is afforded by immigrant labour, higher results than mere material prosperity are being sought after. There is no doubt that the versatility of the Americans will soon turn more definitely to Art. When the entire country has been settled, and every inland waterway is filled with vessels of commerce, "what a spectacle may they not present to the world, if despising the allurements of ambition, and disregarding the erroneous advice of interested leaders, they are content to reap the rewards of their peaceful industry, and to enjoy the blessings which Providence places within their reach!"⁶³ But there is one thing which The Edinburgh notices on several occasions, and which seems to characterize, and still does characterize, all the efforts of the American people along artistic channels. This "that air of business" which plays "about everything American."¹⁹³ This "business-like accuracy and method" was extremely serviceable for utilitarian ends,

but there was a tendency to escape from it which argued well for the development of the more aesthetic side of the subject.

To one field of Science The Edinburgh pays considerable attention, namely, Geology and Mineralogy. Attention is called on several occasions to mineralogical publications in America. 158, 194, 195 Generally speaking, however, The Edinburgh does not so carefully scrutinize American Scientific works as do the other English journals.¹⁹⁶

CONCLUSION

Between 1802 and 1860 America is appreciated, understood, and treated fairly by The Edinburgh Review. The broad interest of the latter does not confine itself to any one field of art or to any one attitude of examination throughout these fifty odd years; its liberalism, its sympathy with the more progressive political elements, its candor and open-mindedness, all contribute to making this journal an important and interesting field for investigation.

The fairness of The Edinburgh admits of fourfold demonstration. In the first place, one need only glance, by way of comparison, at the acrid comment to be found in the pages of other contemporary British reviews and at the indignant remonstrances in The Edinburgh over their unfairness. In the second place, the latter assumes a definite stand against the whole school of hostile writers, travelers, and stay-at-homes who maligned the new country concerning which they knew all too little. In the third place, it takes issue in many cases with its own government when the latter has adopted an unjust policy toward America. Finally, it returns a cool and judicious answer to Walsh's¹ rabid attack, which exaggerates the unfairness of the British journals and seeks to arouse a bitter retaliatory attitude in America.

Throughout the entire period examined there is no marked change in the consistent attitude of The Edinburgh. To be sure, after 1860 the political element predominated more and more in its pages. Previous to that date The Edinburgh watches and waits in vain for the settling down of America which it holds to be a condition necessary for culture; and when, after the war, there comes a new kind of culture and a relaxed attitude on the part of the American mind which has been called "The Pragmatic Acquiescence", 197 The Edinburgh loses interest and its attention is taken up with the defence of political views and the exegesis of economic doctrines at home. Consequently, during this later period there are fewer articles dealing with America.

VITA

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1. Robert Walsh, An Appeal from the Judgments of Great Britain, etc., Philadelphia and London, 1819.
2. Such a series is contemplated under the editorship of Professor Gilbert Chinard of The Johns Hopkins University.
3. For instance, Eleanor and Frances Wright, Imlay and Weld.
4. 1832-LV, 507. Only a few of the many illustrative quotations appearing in the original study have been included in this published version.
5. idem, p. 491
6. John Davis, Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America during 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801. London, 1803.
7. Charles William Janson, The Stranger in America, London, 1807.
8. Richard Parkinson, A Tour in America in 1798, 1799, 1800. London, 1805.
9. Henry Bradshaw Fearon, A Narrative of a Journey of Five Thousand. London, 1818.
10. Thomas Ashe, Travels in America. London, 1809.
11. 1810-XV, 442.
12. Mrs. Frances Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans. London, 1832.
13. John Palmer, Journal of Travel in the United States of America and in Lower Canada. London, 1818.
14. F.A. Michaux, Travels to the Westward of the Alleghany Mountains. London, 1805.
15. Captain Basil Hall, Travels in North America. Edinburgh, 1829.
16. Charles Lyell, Travels in North America. London, 1845.
A Second Visit to the United States. London, 1849.
17. 1807-X, 104, 107.
18. 1843-LXXVIII, 174, 188.
19. 1841-LXXIII, 244.
20. 1819-XXXII, 243.
21. 1858-CVII, 298.
22. 1810-XV, 452.
23. 1818-XXX, 131.
24. 1858-CVIII, 301.
25. 1838-LXVII, 185.
26. 1803-II, 452.
27. 1803-I, 324.

28. 1830-LII, 516.
29. 1808-XII, 165.
30. 1812-XX, 451; 1814-XXIV, 243.
31. 1819-XXXII, 234.
32. 1841-LXXIII, 241.
33. idem, p. 263.
34. 1843-LXXVIII, 191.
35. 1835-LX, 122; 1829-XLIX, 502.
36. 1833-LVI, 462.
37. 1851-XCIV, 61.
38. 1849-XCII, 366.
39. Michael Thomas Sadler, The Law of Population.
London, 1830.
40. 1830-LI, 318.
41. 1818-XXX, 137.
42. 1840-LXX, 147.
43. 1851-XCIV, 60.
44. Charles Lyell, Travels in North America, etc.,
London, 1845.
45. 1850-XCII, 344.
46. 1817-XXVIII, 298.
47. 1838-LXVI, 171.
48. 1807-X, 199.
49. John Bradbury, Travels in the Interior of America,
etc. London, 1817.
50. John M. Duncan, Travels through Parts of the
United States and Canada, etc., Glasgow, 1823.
51. 1829-XLIX, 519.
52. 1850-XCII, 342.
53. 1824-XL, 441.
54. 1850-XCII, 346.
55. 1851-XCIV, 323.
56. idem, p. 356.
57. 1855-CII, 566.
58. 1850-XCII, 348.
59. 1818-XXXI, 144.
60. 1807-X, 109.
61. 1824-XL, 429.
62. 1842-LXXVI, 181.
63. 1854-C, 263.
64. 1838-LXVII, 181.
65. 1833-LVI, 461.
66. 1829-XLIX, 518.

67. 1840-LXX, 128.
68. 1853-XCVIII, 107.
69. 1854-C, 247.
70. 1840-LXXII, 190.
71. 1859-CIX, 335.
72. 1854-C, 44.
73. idem, p. 76.
74. 1837-LXIV, 327.
75. idem, p. 332.
76. 1842-LXXVI, 497.
77. 1824-XL, 442.
78. 1833-LVI, 442.
79. 1850-XCII, 362.
80. 1858-CVIII, 500.
81. idem, p. 568.
82. idem, p. 572.
84. 1820-XXXIII, 420.
85. 1832-LV, 503.
86. 1824-XL, 430.
87. idem, p. 431.
88. 1841-LXXII, 232.
89. idem, p. 25.
90. 1856-CIV, 267.
91. 1830-LI, 496.
92. 1830-XLIX, 506.
93. 1808-XII, 472.
94. 1824-XL, 427.
95. 1819-XXXI, 134.
96. 1860-CXI, 236.
97. 1840-LXX, 133.
98. 1850-XCII, 370.
99. 1847-LXXXVI, 396.
100. Cf. Lewis Mumford, The Golden Day, New York, 1926.
101. 1807-X, 114.
102. 1810-XV, 445.
103. "There is, or was, a Mr. Dwight, who wrote some poems. His baptismal name was Timothy...There was also a Mr. Barlow who wrote an epic." vide supra # 59.
104. 1824-XL, 443.
105. 1819-XXI, 144.
106. Cf. e.g., that in The Eclectic Review 1810-VI, 413.
107. 1809-XV, 24.

108. idem, p. 25.
109. idem, p. 26.
110. So, hazing thro' the void, at first appear
White clouds of canvass floating on the air,
Then frown the broad black decks, the sails are
stay'd,
The gaping portholes cast a frightful shade
....." etc.
111. 1809-XV, 33.
112. idem, p. 34.
113. idem, p. 35.
114. idem, p. 39.
115. The Gentlemen's Magazine Nov.; 1796 -XLVI, 914
also had an interesting article on American
printing and bookselling.
116. 1820-XXXIII, 395.
117. idem, p. 412.
118. A review of The Oxford Book of American Verse
(Apr. 26, 1928) in the Literary Supplement of
the London Times keeps up this tradition by in-
sisting that Poe was inferior to any other prom-
inent American poet "even to Longfellow."
"There is nothing more corrosive in poetry" than
"the mad pride of intellectuality" which he had
in himself. "His communion was a morbid dream
consummation, or drugs, or drink." "He had no
roots and he withered away." "He gave a new
shudder to fiction but not a new beauty to
poetry."
119. 1858-CVII, 419.
120. idem, p. 421.
121. idem, p. 422.
122. idem, p. 438.
123. idem, p. 424.
124. 1858-CVII, 419-442.
125. 1835-LXI, 27.
126. idem, p. 29.
127. 1829-L, 127.
128. Thanotopsis was published in 1817 and his first
volume of verse in 1821.
129. Tamerlane and Other Poems, 1827.
Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems, 1829.

130. 1835-LXI, 21.
131. Cf. University of Wisconsin Studies #1, 1922, pp. 73 ff.
132. 1821-XXV, 135.
133. Whittier, to be sure, had written only his Legends of New England and his pamphlet Justice and Expediency.
134. 1835-LXI, 40.
135. 1835-LXI, 36.
136. Author of a satire on the medical profession under the pen name of Christopher Caustic, M.D.
137. So-called by Janson. vide #7
138. According to the unmentioned editor of the anthology reviewed.
139. 1835-LXI, 28.
140. idem, p. 30.
141. 1832-LV, 520.
142. 1835-LXI, 33.
143. 1900-CXCI, 181.
144. 1891-CLXXIV, 384.
145. idem, p. 394.
146. idem, p. 381.
147. 1900-CXCI, 177.
148. idem, p. 179.
149. idem, p. 175.
150. idem, p. 174.
151. 1810-CCXI, 414.
152. idem, p. 419.
153. idem, p. 420.
154. idem, p. 418.
155. 1908-CCVII, 350.
156. 1910-CCXI, 347.
157. The last number was October, 1930.
158. 1810-XVII, 114.
159. 1819-XXXI, 141.
160. 1829-XLIX, 479.
161. 1810-XV, 28.
162. 1835-LXI, 23.
163. 1829-L, 126.
164. 1829-XLIX, 477.
165. 1855-CII, 547.
166. 1858- CVII, 426.
167. idem, p. 427.

168. 1855-CI, 316.
169. 1828-XLVIII, 2.
170. 1845-LXXXII, 265.
171. 1847-LXXXV, 125.
172. James Fenimore Cooper, History of the Navy of the United States of America. London, 1839.
173. 1840-LXXI, 128.
174. 1829-L, 130.
175. 1817-XXVIII, 279.
176. 1804-V, 180.
177. 1836-LXII, 346.
178. 1809-XIII, 327.
179. 1858-CVII, 441.
180. 1820-XXXIV, 160.
181. idem, p. 161.
182. 1822-XXXVII, 357.
183. 1805-VIII, 341.
184. 1838-LXVII, 194.
185. 1807-X, 113.
186. 1833-LVI, 476.
187. 1850-XCII, 368.
188. 1842-LXXVI, 519.
189. John Barrow, A Voyage to Cochinchina, etc., London, 1806.
190. 1806-IX, 7.
191. "Who pays any attention to American culture? In the four quarters of the globe who reads an American book? or looks at an American picture or statue?" Quoted 1820-XXXIII, 79.
192. Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, London, 1835-40.
193. 1810-XVII, 362.
194. 1818-XXX, 374.
195. 1859-CX, 119.
196. The Monthly Review, The European Magazine and London Review and the Gentleman's Magazine were particularly fond of reviewing publications of a scientific nature.
197. So called by Lewis Mumford in The Golden Day after William James.

